

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Lowell M. Porter



Office of the State Fire Marshal

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Fireworks Users Must be Responsible and Accountable

Chief Lowell Porter announced that with retail fireworks stands opening across the state on June 28, the State Fire Marshal's Office is asking citizens to "Celebrate Safely." The 2004 Celebrate Safely Campaign for fireworks injury prevention will focus on the responsibility and accountability of everyone who uses fireworks. In 2003, there were over 1,300 fireworks-related emergency incidents in Washington. Fires included ten large fire incidents caused by legal fireworks and illegal explosive devices. Injuries included a homicide, an impaled object, and five amputation incidents—all caused by illegal explosive devices.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal urges if you plan to use fireworks during your Independence Day celebrations, please be responsible. Fireworks burn at over 1200F. Light fireworks carefully, well away from people and anything that can burn, especially dry grasses and landscaping.

M-80s, M-100s, and M-1000s are not fireworks, they are illegal explosive devices. Stay away from these items! Do not purchase or discharge them. Illegal explosives are unpredictable and dangerous. You don't know what you are dealing with because no standard was followed when they were made. Possession of an M-80, M-100 and larger, or altered fireworks is a Washington State and federal offense.

Consequences range from a misdemeanor (possession or use of illegal fireworks) to a class C felony (possession or use of illegal explosive devices). A gross misdemeanor can bring a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or one year in prison. Bottle rockets and firecrackers are also illegal when taken off Tribal lands.

Of great concern is the use of fireworks on school properties. In 2003, there were 14 fireworks-related fire incidents at schools; one caused \$62,500 in damages to school property.

Residents should talk with family members and guests about the fireworks laws for their area. Laws restricting or banning the use of fireworks in cities and counties are listed on the fireworks Web site at www.wsp.wa.gov/fireworks/. Attending a public display is a great way to enjoy fireworks. There are over 100 fireworks public displays in Washington State in observance of Independence Day. To learn more about public fireworks displays and other information regarding fireworks, check the fireworks safety Web site or call 1-888-29JULY4.

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